

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1274

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 13499

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: SPEAKER OF LEBANESE PARLIAMENT RAISES PROBLEM OF
CONTINUED ISRAELI SHELLING SOUTH LEBANESE VILLAGES

1. KAMAL ASSAD, SPEAKER OF LEBANESE PARLIAMENT AND
DEPUTY FROM MARYAHOUN, REQUESTED AMBASSADOR CALL ON HIM MORN-
ING NOV. 9. AS AMBASSADOR WAS INVOLVED AT PRESIDENCY WITH
ARRANGEMENTS PRESIDENT FRANGIE'S VISIT TO U.S., DCM MADE
CALL. AT MEETING, ASSAD EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN AT CONTINUED
SHELLING AND OTHER ISRAELI MILITARY ACTION AGAINST
VILLAGES NEAR LEBANON'S SOUTHERN FRONTIER. HE MAINTAINED
NUMBER OF VILLAGERS HAVE BEEN KILLED, THEIR LIVES DISRUPTED
AND THEIR ABILITY TO FARM THEIR LANDS SEVERLY CIRCUMSCRIBED.
HE SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND ALTHOUGH NOT CONDONE ISRAELI
RETALIATION AGAINST FEDAYEEN ACTIVITY, HOWEVER, THERE HAD BEEN
NO PRETEXT, ACCORDING TO ASSAD, FOR SOME TIME. HE TALKED WITH
VILLAGERS WHO CLAIMED THERE HAD BEEN NO FEDAYEEN
ACTIVITY IN THAT AREA RECENTLY. HE ALSO MAINTAINED
THAT PLO HAD ASSURED GOVERNMENT THAT IT HAD CEASED
CROSS BORDER OPERATIONS.

2. DCM POINTED OUT THAT THE PROBLEM DID NOT APPEAR
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TO BE FATAH AS MUCH AS SOME OF THE MORE EXTREMIST

GROUPS, PFLP/GC AND GEORGE HABASH'S PFLP AND SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED 5 FEDAYEEN WHO WITHIN RECENT WEEKS ALLEGEDLY ENTERED ISRAEL FROM LEBANON. ASSAD STILL MAINTAINED THAT THESE GROUPS HAVE NOT BEEN ACTIVE RECENTLY. IN CLOSING, HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHAT COULD BE DONE BUT HE HOPED THAT STEPS COULD BE TAKEN TO PREVENT FURTHER HARASSMENT OF THE LIVES OF THESE POOR VILLAGERS.

3. DCM AGREED TO TRANSMIT HIS VIEWS TO WASHINGTON.

4. COMMENT: IN TALKING WITH UNTSO AND OTHER KNOWLEDGE-ABLE SOURCES, WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH THAT THERE HAS BEEN MUCH FEDAYEEN ACTIVITY IN THE SOUTH RECENTLY. IF THERE HAS BEEN, AS ONE UNTSO OFFICER COMMENTED, IT HAS BEEN VERY DISCREET. IT WOULD APPEAR, THEREFORE, THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE TAKING PRE-EMPTIVE ACTION AND ENDEAVORING TO KEEP THE FEDAYEEN OFF BALANCE.

5. UNFORTUNATELY, THE PEOPLE WHO ARE SUFFERING FROM ISRAELI ATTACKS ARE THOSE LEAST ABLE TO AFFORD IT. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS WELL AWARE, THE FRONTIER AREA OF LEBANON IS ONE OF THE MORE DEPRESSED REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY. THE FARMERS THERE EKE OUT A MARGINAL EXISTENCE FROM THEIR LAND. WHATEVER THE ISRAELIS MAY THINK, SHELLING THE VILLAGES IS NOT GOING TO SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT FEDAYEEN OPERATIONS ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, AS THE FEDAYEEN APPEAR TO HAVE AS LITTLE REGARD FOR THE WELL BEING OF THESE PEOPLE AS THE ISRAELIS. THERE IS ALSO LITTLE THE VILLAGERS CAN DO IF ARMED FEDAYEEN ENTER THEIR VILLAGES OR HOMES.

6. WE CAN UNDERSTAND THAT THE ISRAELIS MUST TAKE REASONABLE STEPS TO PREVENT TERRORISM. HOWEVER, IT DOES SEEM THAT THE ENTHUSIASM WITH WHICH THEY ARE CURRENTLY SHELLING THE SOUTH COULD JUSTIFIABLY BE BLUNTED SOMEWHAT BY A JUDICIOUS WORD FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.
GODLEY

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